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Subject Area - Psychology

Counselling Interventions

Counselling interventions have been defined in professional literature as a unique interrelationship between a client and a counsellor, which aims to create a change and a growth in three main areas: Personal development, social adjustment, and professional development. During the counselling process, the counsellor has the responsibility to contribute to the process of change, concerning to his or her client's personal development (Bordin, 1968). The current essay will demonstrate several significant elements that are associated with counselling intervention as a psychological process, clarifying important aspects and strategies that contribute to the effectiveness of the process.

The Benefits of Allowing the Client to Explore

During the history of psychology and counselling a wide range of attitudes and approaches such as the Psychoanalytic theory, the Gestalt, Rogers' Theory and the Behaviourism have been developed in order to provide the client the ability to explore his or her inner world in varied strategies and modes of interaction that aim to increase the level of awareness as well as the level of motivation to change. By allowing the client to explore his or her hidden world and new aspects in his or her behaviour, recognising social and mental experiences can occur during the treatment process as well as the development of an insight. The aim to facilitate clients to progress in exploration process has been greatly based on the concept that through connecting with vital healthy cores and by changing feelings, thoughts and behaviour in an individual way, the client can progress in the healing process and to fulfil his or her human potential.

The Benefits of Using Silences in the Relationship

Lerner (1989) has defined intimate relationship as "...one in which neither party silences, sacrifices, or betrays the self and each party expresses strength and vulnerability, weakness and competence in a balanced way." (Lerner, 1989, p.3). Monsour (1992) has added that during the process the counsellor provides an unconditional support, which has been regarded as one aspect of an intimate relationship. Silences have been considered as un-verbal reactions that express different meanings such as empathy and understanding or confusion and misunderstanding. Using silences in the relationship allows both the counsellor and the client to get closer, to share feelings and thoughts, or in a different way, to be aware of distances and gaps that may occur in the process. Using silences also reflects to the client that he or she is being listened to and that his or her shared feelings and thoughts are being carefully regarded.

The Benefits of Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing has been regarded in professional literature as an influential reaction that contributes greatly to the process' progress. This reaction encourages additional thoughts and new expressions and aids the client in examining conflicts. Using paraphrasing during counselling also assists the counsellor to clarify and brighten the client's expressions. It is also significant to note that reflecting expressions in the relationships has been regarded as a similar psychological technique to paraphrasing although it includes emotional aspects beyond cognitional elements that are used in paraphrasing. However, using both paraphrasing and reflecting in the counselling process encourages the client to explore and examine his or her feelings and thoughts, brightens significant hidden aspects, and aids in developing an insight.

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The Benefits of Using REBT Challenges

Basing on several major psychological approaches such as the Cognitive Behaviour Change theory, clients in therapeutic treatments are required to monitor their feelings, thinking and interacting both with themselves and with others, as they are encouraged to make changes in the “scripted nature” of their behaviour (Meichenbaum, 1986). Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT) has reflected the concept that the client’s disturbing emotions have been based on wrong or false thinking and beliefs. By using REBT challenges during the treatment process such as self-talk and self-statements, the client can challenge his or her wrong beliefs and assumptions through self-defeating internal dialogue. REBT strategies provide clients the tools and the ability to replace exaggerated beliefs and thoughts with encouraging adaptive thinking, emphasising the modification of self-destructive concepts and feelings and the elimination of irrational or negative thoughts.

The Benefits of Using Positive Verbal Encourages such as “Yes” and “OK”

Counsellors’ attitudes and reaction can assist their clients to make a significant change in the thoughts as well as behaviour. Using positive verbal encourages such as “yes” and “ok” during the counselling process can reflect the client that the counsellor believes in his or her ability to succeed in handling with his or her current condition and in progressing in the rehabilitation process. Using positive verbal encourages can also create a positive environment, in which the client trusts confidentially his or her counsellor’s supportive expressions and behaviour.

The Belief behind Directive Counselling

During the history of psychological counselling varied directive approaches such as Interpersonal Therapy and the Gestalt approach and non-directive approaches such as Roger’s theory have been developed, basing on different concepts and assumptions. Interpersonal Therapy has focused on the interpersonal relationships of the client, assuming that psychological problems can be treated by changing and improving patterns of relationships and communication. The significant aspect of the interrelationship of the individual with the environment has also played a central role in the Gestalt approach, emphasising the individual’s perception of reality.

Since the 1970s behavioural approaches have emphasised the aspect of the role of thinking and the patterns of beliefs and its crucial effect on human behaviour. In earlier years, behavioural approaches and methods focused on elements such as behaviours and actions that were observable, basing on the assumption that feelings and thoughts can be changed following the change of behaviour. Cognitive therapists have believed that individuals can only change their behaviour or the way they act by changing their patterns of thinking and beliefs. Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapy, for instance, has been based on the concept that an individual develops different forms of beliefs, thinking and actions as a result of his or her earlier experiences and his or her interpretations and perceptions of these experiences, while its purpose is to alter and uncover negative or false patterns of thinking and behaviour which may be causing or strengthening anxieties or distress.

These approaches have emphasised the main purpose of the counselling process as a psychological treatment that aims to aid the client to expose and to classify distorted patterns of thinking and beliefs and to learn new realistic ways to

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interpret personal experiences. The transformation from traditional behavioural treatment to cognitive-behavioural treatment has reflected a less mechanical treatment, as the client's thinking patterns and beliefs have been considered as the main resources to behavioural change as well as a central component in the counselling process.

The Belief behind Congruence

According to Rogers (1957) a central key to self-generated rehabilitation of psychological problems and a healthy personality development is hidden in the sufficient conditions of personality change. These necessary conditions consist beyond other critical elements such as empathy and honesty in the therapeutic treatment, components of congruence. The three main core conditions of unconditional positive regard, empathy and congruence aids the client in feeling respected, valued and listened to non-judgmentally. The usage of congruence in the counselling process has been based on the concept that counsellors who behave in this manner encourage their clients to share their thoughts and experiences conveniently, moving towards feelings of unconditional respect and acceptance. The element of congruence reflects to the client trust, honesty and transparency, in respect of the counsellor's personality and behaviour, creates a positive environment of respect and open communication, and promotes him or her to expose his or her thoughts, beliefs and feelings.

The Strengths of Using Summaries

Using summaries, or in other words, statements that draw together and review the essence of significant client's expressions can condense and reflect important thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings that the client has expressed, and several cases explored, during the counselling process. Summaries that often occur at transition stages within a session or at the end of a session assist the client to organise expressions and events that have occurred in an earlier stage of the session.

The Strengths of Focusing on a Client Issue

Burton (1975) has suggested that the therapist behaves during the treatment process as a person who involved deeply with the client and his or her environment. Miller and Rollnick (1991) have added that motivational techniques and strategies that focus on the client in the process and his or her immediate environment can lead to effective results. It is mostly essential to clarify to the client that the counselling treatment aims to be centred on his or her thoughts and behaviour and to assist him or her to make the desirable change. Another aspect, which is important to mention, is that the counsellor's concentration on his or her thoughts and reactions rather than on the relationship with the client can create a crucial disturbance in the existed interpersonal communication.

The Weaknesses of Closed Questions

In contrast to open questions that allow the client to broaden his or her cognitive field, encouragement to explore his or her thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings and the relationship with his or her counsellor, closed questions eliminate and limit the client's ability to use these crucial psychological strategies and tools. Furthermore, closed questions often include the answer in their patterns, can usually be answered in a few words, and more demanding an answer rather than inviting one. Questions should also be focused around the situations and concerns of the clients, rather than the

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counsellor's concerns for them. Additionally, one of the central weaknesses of closed questions is that the counsellor leads his or her client to issues that are of interest of the counsellor himself/herself.

The Weaknesses of Showing a Lack of Respect

Basing on professional literature, researchers have emphasised a respectful, objective and caring approach to be essential during the treatment process, as the client can feel disrespect even whether he or she in a stage of regression, in respect to their mental situation, and confrontation often leads to negative results as denial (Miller et al., 1992), while the therapist should use the accurate approach and information, if required, to each stage of the process (Diclemente, 1991). Rogers (1951) has declared that the best way to help clients to help themselves is by creating and maintaining a true respect and trust environment during the treatment process, which he called un-functional positive relation. Basing on this concept, treatment providers in general, and counsellors in particular, should reflect to their clients that they believe in the clients' abilities to use their resources in an effective way, as the clients themselves are responsible to their thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviour. During the treatment process, counsellors should help the client to be aware to his or her feelings behaviour, offering the essential tools and resources. In a pleasant environment, clients can handle with their thoughts and behaviour in their individual way and with respect to their mental condition, even though they may be sometimes distorted or denied by them. Furthermore, Counsellors should behave in a way that makes the client feel greatly in his or her presence and interest. They are not being deterred from using their individual authority as they activate it in order to help clients to have their own authority in their life.

Conclusion

Finally, another important aspect that should be regarded in the counselling process as well as in other treatment processes is the ethic of care. Many theorists have encircled the concepts that are engaged with the ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982), which addresses values of trust, protection from harm, attention and interdependence (Benjamin, 2001). The current essay has reviewed significant strategies that can contribute to the effectiveness of counselling interventions such as using REBT Challenges, focusing on a client issue, and creating a positive environment of respect and honesty. The usage of these crucial elements has reflected the concept that although during the counselling process a flexible environment is created, in which the client feels confident to explore and examine earlier experiences that have not been sublimated, the counsellor's thoughts and behaviour are not less significant, and he or she must create an environment, which is characterised by congruence, empathic understanding and acceptance.

Resources

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